

“Remember”

Deuteronomy 15, 16, 24

- I was recently made aware of a phrase that is repeated multiple times in Deuteronomy
- The use of the phrase, as the basis of a sermon, caused me to go back and examine the context
- It is a phrase that makes sense to anyone who understands the history of Israel
- It is a phrase that will also resonate with the believer in Christ
- It will resonate with anyone brought forth from a life bound in sin and made free by the Savior
- Let's not be confused, the phrase has specific meaning to the children of Israel
- But the context in which it is used provides profitable lessons for anyone [and everyone]
- The phrase... "remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt"
- It is found in Deut. 15:15, 16:12, 24:18, and 24:22
- Why is the phrase used?
- What is God's purpose for reminding Israel to remember?
- What should we remember?
- Why should we remember?
- Let's get into the passage...

Deuteronomy 15:11-15

11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

12 And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

13 And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

14 Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

15 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

- In this chapter, Moses addresses the release of debts every seventh year
- And the release of servants after seven years of service
- We begin the passage with a general word of encouragement to charity
- Open your hand to your brother – to the poor – to the needy
- I alludes to their responsibility as countrymen
- Have a certain outlook or perspective regarding the needy, it is telling them
- The Hebrew servants mentioned here could have sold themselves
- They could have been sold by their parents – due to extreme poverty
- Or sold by the court of judgement – for some crime having been committed
- The service could have been, perhaps would have been, an escape for some difficulty of life
- First, let them go free the seventh year
- When you do send them away, think about, consider, have a care for their situation
- Don't let them go away empty-handed
- Again, it is a perspective, an empathy, a compassion that is required of them
- That perspective, that empathy, that compassion should lead to action
- These character traits always do, right?

- Commentator Matthew Henry says this about the servant in question:

"It was to be supposed that they had nothing of their own, and that their friends had little or nothing for them, else they else they would have been redeemed before they were discharged by law; they had no wages for their service, and all they got by their labour was their masters', so that their liberty would do them little good, having nothing to begin the world with; therefore their masters are here commanded to furnish them liberally with corn and cattle."

- Masters would told to set them up, do right by them, take of what they had to get them started
- Now comes the command to remember
- It is obvious why it comes at this moment – and in this context
- How could a people, slaves to "hard bondage" in Egypt, delivered by God, not remember?
- They had been greatly enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians, and redeemed
- This word "redeemed," means to ransom, to release, to deliver
- And remember when they were delivered – observe the words of Exodus 12:33, 35, and 36

33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.

35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:

36 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.

- Not only were the people of Israel delivered, but they were also set up, equipped to proceed
- They were to remember
- They were to have compassion
- They were to act justly
- And do right
- This phrase is used again in chapter 16

Deuteronomy 16:10-12

10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

11 And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

12 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

- This chapter repeats the laws concerning feasts
- The feast of weeks required a "freewill offering"
- The offering was to be brought cheerfully, based on the generosity of the giver
- It was also based on how a person had been blessed by God
- These requirements are not unlike those given to us

- But they were to do more than just give
- They, and their families, and all associated with them, and their neighbors, were to rejoice
- We should see a thankfulness that is reflected in their gifts, but we also see a heart of joy
- How can this be?
- Why can they (should they) take action in this way?
- Again, it is because of their remembrance
- They were bondmen in Egypt, yet they have been delivered
- Now on to chapter 24

Deuteronomy 24:14-18

14 Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

15 At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

16 The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

18 But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

- In this section we find prohibition
- Certain perspectives and actions are forbidden, regarding both brethren and strangers
- And this is true both for masters and judges
- Oppression is not to take place
- Injustice is forbidden
- Masters must be faithful and punctual in paying wages
- They have to understand that those in their employ are anxious to have it
- They need it – for they live from one payment to the next
- If a master is negligent, it may be that a servant would cry unto the Lord
- And it would indeed be considered a sin for that master
- Furthermore, judges and magistrates must do right
- Every person was to be responsible for their own actions
- The course of justice was not to be perverted in any way
- All people, no matter their origin or station were to be treated equitably
- Because all were to remember that they were delivered from bondage
- How much injustice had they suffered?
- How much wrong had been done them in that foreign land?
- We know of some, both in the days preceding Moses birth and in the days before departure
- Exodus 1:11, 13 and 14 read:

11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:

14 And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

- And we know that what came next was the brutal command to kill every son that was born
- To cast them in the river
- And it was God-fearing midwives that chose to obey God rather than men, which altered history
- Eventually came forth a son who was not thrown in the river to drown (Pharaoh's edict)
- But drawn out of the water by Pharaoh's daughter
- He would be called from the backside of the desert to lead his people out
- God saw everything and told Moses in Exodus 3:7-8:

7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;

- The people were to remember
- And they were to act in justice and in all integrity toward brethren and strangers
- Still one other instance we see...

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

22 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

- The stranger, the fatherless, and the widow are to be taken into account
- Those with much are told to leave some behind
- They are to think of others, understanding their need
- Again, they are to act (and fail to act, as it were) in compassion
- And they were to do it because of what they remembered

I wonder what we remember of being delivered from the bondage of sin?

Does it cross our minds when there are opportunities to live a life of kindness, of empathy, of generosity, of thankfulness, and of compassion toward others?

We were once in bondage. But thanks to Christ, we have been delivered. "Remember."

Christopher Harper, Take Note 2021